

# 14-year-old named America's Top Young Scientist for development of skin cancer treatment

*3M and Discovery Education recognize America's Top Young Scientist and Improving Lives Award winner at the 16<sup>th</sup> annual 3M Young Scientist Challenge*

ST. PAUL, Minn. and CHARLOTTE, N.C., Oct. 11, 2023 /PRNewswire/ -- [3M](#) (@3M) and [Discovery Education](#) (@DiscoveryEd) named [Heman Bekele](#), a 9th grader at W.T. Woodson High School in Annandale, Va., the winner of the 2023 [3M Young Scientist Challenge](#), the nation's premier middle school science competition. Heman set himself apart with his compound-based Skin Cancer Treating Soap (SCTS). As the grand prize winner, he will receive a \$25,000 cash prize and the prestigious title of "America's Top Young Scientist."

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## *14-year-old Heman Bekele wins the 2023 3M Young Scientist Challenge with Skin Cancer Treating Soap*

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Heman spent the last four months competing against nine other finalists and secured his win during final Challenge events at 3M global headquarters in St. Paul, Minn., on October 9 and 10. Finalists navigated a series of interactive challenges and were evaluated on their ingenuity and innovative thinking, application of STEM principles, demonstration of passion and research, presentation skills, and ability to inspire others.

"The need for scientists and innovators to develop solutions for the world's biggest challenges has never been greater. This year's Young Scientist Challenge finalists have demonstrated the skills required to reimagine what's possible—intelligence, curiosity, collaboration, and resilience," said John Banovetz, 3M executive vice president, chief technology officer and environmental responsibility. "The magnitude and complexity of the issues these young minds are working to solve is inspiring. Congratulations to this year's finalists—we can't wait to see what you do next!"

Skin cancer is the [most common cancer](#) in the United States, with an average annual treatment cost of \$8.1 billion. Inspired by this costly and widespread health issue, Heman developed an affordable soap solution that could positively impact skin cancer outcomes. Over the next five years, he hopes to refine this novel innovation and create a nonprofit organization that will distribute this low-cost solution to communities in need.

Young Scientist Challenge finalists are paired with a 3M scientist who mentors and works with them one-on-one over the summer to transform their idea from concept to prototype. This year's winner was paired with Deborah Isabelle, Product Engineering Specialist, Abrasives, 3M Automotive Aftermarket Division.

The program's Improving Lives Award gives students, teachers, parents, and other members of the public a chance to cast their vote for the innovation they believe has the most potential to make a positive impact on the world. This year's winner is [Annie Katz](#), a 9th grader at Leffell School in New Rochelle, N.Y., whose Automated Ultrasound Hamstring Lesion Detection & Diagnosis device offers a more accessible way to detect and recover from hamstring lesions. As the Improving Lives Award winner, Annie will receive a \$2,000 prize.

The second and third place winners from the Young Scientist Challenge each receive a \$2,000 prize. These exceptional students are:

In second place, Shripriya Kalbhavi from San Jose, Calif., a 9th grader at Lynbrook High School. Shripriya developed EasyBZ, a cost-effective microneedle patch that allows for self-automated drug delivery without pills or needles.

In third place, Sarah Wang from Andover, Mass., a 7th grader at The Pike School. Sarah developed the Spring Epilepsy Detection Glove, a glove that can detect tonic-clonic and myoclonic epileptic seizures with common hand movements and tracks seizure statistics through a smart phone application.

The fourth through tenth place winners each receive a \$1,000 prize and a \$500 gift card. These finalists, in alphabetical order by last name, are:

Anisha Dhoot from Portland, Ore., a 9th grader at Westview High School in Beaverton School District  
Ishaan Iyer from Rancho Cucamonga, Calif., a 6th grader at Day Creek Intermediate School in Etiwanda School District

Sean Jiang from Baltimore, Md., a 9th grader at Gilman School, Independent/Private

Annie Katz from New Rochelle, N.Y., a 9th grader at Leffell School in Greenburgh School District

Anish Kosaraju from Saratoga, Calif., a 9th grader at The Harker School in Campbell Union School District

Adhip Maitra from Oviedo, Fla., a 9th grader at Oviedo High School in Seminole County School District

Shruti Sivaraman from Austin, Tex., an 8th grader at Canyon Vista Middle School in Round Rock Independent School District

"Over the past 16 years, we've had the honor of enabling innovative students to turn their ideas into world-changing solutions through the 3M Young Scientist Challenge," said Amy Nakamoto, executive vice president of social impact at Discovery Education. "Their work is a rare and impressive accomplishment, and we congratulate each and every one of them."

In its sixteenth year, the 3M Young Scientist Challenge continues to inspire and challenge middle school students to think creatively and apply the power of STEM to discover real-world solutions. America's Top Young Scientists have gone on to give TED Talks, file patents, found nonprofits, make the Forbes 30 Under 30 list, and exhibit at the White House Science Fair. These young innovators have also been named TIME Magazine's first Kid of the Year, featured in The New York Times Magazine, Forbes, and Business Insider, and have appeared on national television programs such as Good Morning America, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, and more. In addition, a 3M Young Scientist Challenge Alumni Network was formed in fall 2022 and welcomed more than 100 former challenge finalists and winners for networking opportunities.

The award-winning competition supplements the 3M and Discovery Education program [Young Scientist Lab](#), which provides no-cost dynamic digital resources for students, teachers, and families to explore, transform, and innovate the world around them. All its resources are also available on Discovery Education *Experience*, the company's award-winning K-12 learning platform.

To download images from the 2023 science competition, click [here](#). To learn more about the 3M Young Scientist Challenge and meet this year's winners and finalists, visit [youngscientistlab.com](https://youngscientistlab.com).

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